

Dear Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee,

I OPPOSE Raised H.B. No. 5653 AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN EXCISE TAX ON AMMUNITION TO PROVIDE FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY GUN VIOLENCE AND INTERVENTION PROGRAM GRANTS.

Legal firearms owners in CT are among the state's most responsible residents. These are productive citizens, and many work to create peaceful neighborhoods where everyone benefits. Legal firearms owners are not the perpetrators of violence in the state. It should go without saying that law abiding citizens should not be penalized for the actions of criminals. This bill is misguided, at best.

There should not be any additional reason needed for the committee to quickly dismiss this bill and move on to the important business of this legislative session. However, here are a few other factors to consider when rejecting this bill.

Perhaps some feel that a "sin tax" is appropriate because the existence of firearms somehow causes violence. This ignores the portion of human history that predates existence of firearms, but tax schemes on tobacco, alcohol and gambling are often the justification given. We have been told that increasing taxes on tobacco have the desired effect to make it prohibitively expensive, and this is an important part of public policy to eliminate tobacco use within the state. Perhaps that was an objective of "sin taxes" at one point, and it clearly is all about revenue now. But firearms and ammunition are not a harmful substance, and there are no facts showing that purchase of ammunition by legal firearms owners contributes to violence in the state. It is already illegal to purchase ammunition in the state without a valid firearms permit. It may be helpful for the legislature to learn exactly where those committing violent crime are getting ammunition from, and work to shut down those avenues. When the facts are known, lawful firearms owners and businesses in the state are not the providers of ammunition to those not permitted to have it. There are laws in place that should be used to prosecute those causing violence, including those that provide illegal access to firearms and ammunition.

People unfamiliar with firearms may not be aware that many responsible firearms owners practice regularly with live ammunition at ranges. Many thousands of rounds of ammunition are safely fired each year at CT ranges, without injury to people or property. This is normal and expected. Developing proficiency with a firearm is an important aspect of firearms safety. Increasing the cost will reduce the frequency of training, and this would be negative development.

The only thing H.B. 5653 would accomplish is to increase the cost of a legitimate form of recreation and self-defense. The cost for this right has been increased significantly over the past decade, as a result of state-imposed fees. The human right of self-defense should not be restricted to a privileged wealthy few. The most unsafe communities in the state are not typically the most affluent. Residents of these communities do not have the luxury of private security. It is exceptionally cruel to knowingly increase the cost of personal security beyond the reasonable ability of the residents that need it most to afford.

Sincerely,

Joseph Sanders

Wallingford